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United States Department of State

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Dear Mr. Hall:

This is in response to your letter of July 1 regarding the establishment of a war crimes tribunal to try persons accused of violating international humanitarian law in Rwanda. I am pleased to inform you that the United Nations, with our support, has begun to investigate genocide in Rwanda. Following are some of the steps we and other concerned governments have taken to address this crisis.

The United States supported the May 17 decision of the UN Security Council to expand the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), the UN peacekeeping force, from its current level of 450 troops to up to 5,500 troops. The enlarged force will have the expanded mandate of protecting relief efforts and helping to ensure the safety of threatened civilian populations. We are working closely with the UN to finalize planning on the mission in order to expedite deployment. We supported UN authorization for an emergency humanitarian intervention led by the French to protect threatened populations until the expanded UNAMIR can deploy. The May 17 UN resolution also places an arms embargo on Rwanda, a measure that the United States strongly advocated and fully supports.

Since the crisis began, we have exerted continuous diplomatic pressure on the warring parties to stop the killings, agree to an immediate cease-fire, and resume negotiations within the framework of the Arusha peace accord signed in August 1993. The United States was a key supporter of the year-long Arusha negotiations, and we are pushing the parties to revive this process.

The Honorable
Tony P. Hall,
House of Representatives.

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The United States strongly supported convening a special session of the UN Human Rights Commission to consider the Rwandan tragedy. As a result of the session, held May 24-25, a special rapporteur was sent to investigate human rights atrocities in Rwanda - a key U.S. goal. His report, issued June 28, provided details of the massacres in Rwanda, which he classified as genocide, and called for an international tribunal to prosecute the perpetrators of the massacres.

The Department of State agrees with your assertion that those who are responsible for violations of international humanitarian law should be held accountable for their actions. We have begun to collect documentation which will be submitted to the Commission of Experts, which was established by the United Nations Security Council to determine whether grave violations of international humanitarian law were committed in Rwanda. We are asking non-governmental organizations assisting Rwandan refugees and displaced persons and who have contact with others who may have witnessed atrocities to provide documentation which will also be submitted to the Commission. We hope that in this way we may be able to pass information to the Commission of Experts on those suspected of ordering or carrying out these violations. We will support the creation of an international tribunal if the Commission of Experts confirms that violations of international humanitarian law have occurred.

We hope this information has been helpful in addressing your concerns. Please feel free to contact us if you need further assistance.

Sincerely,



Wendy R. Sherman
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs

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